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The Urge for Disarmament

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SOME few years ago there was sent me a little book entitled *The Monroe Doctrine an Obsolete Shibboleth*, the argument of which was, as indicated by the title, that if the celebrated "doctrine" could be defined, as to which the author had not arrived at a satisfactory conclusion, and assuming that it could at one time have been justified as a national policy, of which there was to his mind grave doubt, subsequent events had made it indefensible and its maintenance or enforcement unwise, if not dangerously impolitic.

The discussion in and out of Congress of the Versailles Treaty, and particularly of Article 1 thereof, the covenant for a League of Nations, and the results of the last national election, demonstrate that it is the book referred to, not the Monroe Doctrine, that is obsolete.

The people of America are evidently wedded to the principle that the doctrine enunciates and are determined to uphold it, a condition that can not be overlooked in connection with the subject of national defense, and particularly any provision that may be made for ensuring the relative strength or efficiency of our navy. In that aspect our coast line is not restricted to those great stretches, extending on one ocean from the St. Croix to the Rio Grande and on the other from the Strait of Juan de Fuca to the Rio Tia Juana, supplemented by the immense Alaska front, but extends uninterrupted from New Brunswick around Cape Horn through Bering Strait to the region of perpetual ice, save for

the comparatively small section comprising the British Columbia coast. Obviously no foe will ever challenge us in the assertion of the Monroe Doctrine except by futile protest, unless he be superior in strength on the sea. Our navy overcome, we might still prevent the landing of a hostile force in Mexico, but south of that territory we should be utterly helpless. If there were no other reason impelling us to that course, the preservation of the Monroe Doctrine requires that we maintain a navy equal to that of any other nation, as advocated by Mr. Denby, Secretary of the Navy, as well as by his predecessor, charged with being unduly inclined to pacifism.

However, that is no reason why we should not at once enter into some arrangement to reduce or at least limit naval armaments. The three great maritime nations, Great Britain, the United States and Japan are engaged in a scarcely concealed rivalry in naval construction, including the construction of auxiliary air craft. Japan, according to information deemed by our government quite reliable, is utilizing English shipyards in her feverish haste to bring her navy to the standard of ours, while Great Britain, fearful that we shall overtake her, has, according to late reports, resolved upon the construction of four leviathans, each to have a displacement of 55,000 tons and to carry 20-inch guns that will hold at bay, because of their greater range, the monsters of our fleet of the New Mexico class, the most formidable fighting machines now afloat, armed with twelve guns, six-

teen inches in diameter. Of the senselessness of this competition, of the awful waste it involves when every dollar of available capital ought to be conserved to repair the ravages of the war and rehabilitate industry both at home and abroad, it is unnecessary to speak.

But we can not shut our eyes to the inevitable effect of such a race. The fatal culmination of similar rivalry between Great Britain and Germany is a lesson too recent and too impressive to be forgotten or disregarded. At least we ought to try to stop it. No time should be lost in proposing to the governments of Great Britain and Japan the assembling of a conference with a view to an international agreement to bring it to an end. The initiative may, with entire propriety, come from us. We can open negotiations without giving occasion for the slightest suspicion that we are moved by financial stress, or for a revival of intimations once given credence that we are too sordid to fight.

In resources and in credit our country is unrivaled. We can outstrip either of the nations evidencing a disposition to compete with us or to achieve or hold supremacy. Japan could not wring from her people the funds for the construction of one vessel for every two we might lay down without provoking a protest from our taxpayers, if such a policy seemed essential to ward off aggression by that rising power. Added to domestic difficulties of the gravest character, Great Britain owes us four and a half billion dollars, adequate to the construction of a hundred battleships such as it is now said she contemplates constructing, or half that number with the necessary auxiliary craft. We could build four of them, as many as report says she is about to lay down, annually from the interest on her obligations to us.

Mention disarmament to the statesman who prides himself on being "practical" and he pops forthwith at you the question, "Do you suppose Britain will ever consent to surrender her control of the seas?" What alternative has she? Just one—to continue the present rivalry until bankruptcy overtakes either her or us. Except, indeed, she may artfully persuade us to abandon the policy on which we embarked five years ago to make our navy the equal of that of any nation. In that policy there should be "No variableness, neither shadow of turning," until an international agreement is arrived at, looking to the reduction of naval armaments to a point at which they would be useless for the purposes of international war. We should adhere to it to force such a consummation, however distasteful that course may be to any other nation.

At the last session of Congress an amendment to the naval appropriation bill was agreed to by unanimous vote of the Senate, requesting the President to invite the governments of Great Britain and Japan to join with the United States in a conference, with a view to negotiating a treaty concerning the limitation of the navies of the countries participating. It is again offered at this session, the bill referred to never having reached a final vote. The President has signified a preference that no expression should be made on the subject by Congress, and, complying with his desires, the Senate committee declined to report the amendment favorably. What its fate will be on the floor it is impossible now to predict. Recent history and more not so recent will not permit us to doubt that the influence of the executive in such a matter will be potent.

Without the slightest purpose to offer any partisan opposition to his plans, I should regard a failure on the part of

the Congress to agree to the amendment as singularly unfortunate. It could not fail to be interpreted as further evidence that America has no purpose to disarm, with or without an international agreement, because she harbors imperialistic designs, and that whatever professions we may have made in that regard were insincere. Nor can I conceive how such an expression from Congress can in any way embarrass the executive in any plans he may have looking to concerted action among the nations to reduce armaments either on land or sea or both. It appears to me that it would be absurd to say that expressions in the nature of memorials from state legislatures, municipalities, or civic bodies, praying that the executive suggest to the nations named such a conference, would in any wise embarrass him, if, indeed, he is sympathetic with the idea; and it would be unthinkable that the President should indicate a desire that they desist from such expressions.

If there be a common conviction among the people of the country that such a conference ought to be called, as the vote referred to indicates, why should it not be given expression through Congress rather than through the less generally representative bodies or organizations mentioned, or through the press, the pulpit or the platform?

We ought not to content ourselves with accomplishing or attempting to accomplish a reduction in naval armaments. The idea has, in some manner, taken possession of the public mind that the tremendous appropriations we are making for purposes of war reach the magnitude they attain chiefly because of our naval building program. But of the grand total of approximately \$500,000,000 carried in the naval appropriation bill, as reported by the Senate committee at the last session,

only \$105,000,000 was for construction, about twenty per cent, and less than twelve and one-half per cent of the aggregate carried by the bills for the support of the army and the navy.

In the total expended for purposes of war by all the nations, navies claim a relatively small amount. It is the burden of supporting the land forces of the nations that is breaking the back of the world, estimated, with substantial accuracy, I dare say, at \$8,000,000,-000 a year. France, with a population of 40,000,000 and a national debt of \$50,000,000,000 is endeavoring to maintain an army of 800,000 men in contrast with our force, to be reduced at least to 175,000 and probably to 150,000. Italy, with a national debt approximating her total national wealth, is staggering under the cost of keeping up an army of 350,000 men. If one-half of the vast sum which annually goes to keep up military establishments were utilized in rehabilitating industry in the war-torn areas of Europe and Asia, there would be no economic crisis to rack the world nor any ground for apprehending revolutionary uprisings of the proletariat, offered as an excuse for perpetuating the militaristic system.

Congress should declare itself emphatically in favor of calling a conference for general disarmament, or for participation in the deliberations of the committee already appointed by the Council of the League of Nations for the purpose of drafting a plan for a general reduction of armaments. Having again become participants in the deliberations of the reparations commission, existing by virtue of the Versailles Treaty, there remains no reason why we should decline to sit with the commission on disarmament, unless it be that we are interested in reparations but not in disarmament. It will be recalled that an invitation

was extended to our government by the Council of the League to send a representative to sit with its commission, charged with the duty of preparing a plan for disarmament to be submitted to the several governments, and that the invitation was declined by President Wilson on the ground that the United States had not become a member of the League, a most inconsequential reason, seeing that the invitation was extended to us as a nation outside the League. Had the United States been a member, no invitation would have been sent; we should have been participants in the creation of the commission.

It is said that the time for the consideration of the subject is not opportune, that France has declared she can not now consent to a reduction in her military establishment. But France, represented as she is on the Council of the League, was one of the nations joining in the creation of the commission and extending to us the invitation to participate. If some of her statesmen have since, for the purpose of coercing Germany, a purpose now fulfilled, declared her fixed intention to maintain her army at its present strength, they may find reason to change their minds if it can be shown to the fearfully burdened taxpayers of that country that, by giving their concurrence to a general scheme of reduction, they may save annually the one-half of the stupendous sum they pay to maintain their army. The next generation of the German people will invoke blessings on the heads of those who forced upon their government the obligation not to maintain an

army of more than 100,000 men. They will meet the interest on the stupendous amount of the reparation exacted of them by the saving they will be able to make in their army and navy budget, as it would be were they to attempt to maintain their military establishment on the scale of its former grandeur under the Kaiser.

The world's troubles would dissipate like the mist before the morning sun if it could only get rid of armies and navies maintained for international war, the expense of which appreciates constantly and alarmingly with the development of science. The horrors which characterized the last great war but feebly foreshadow those which will attend the next if in the Providence of God and the wilfulness of man there should be another world war. Despite all that was said of the inhumanity of the innovations made by Germany in her effort to conquer the world, every military nation accepts them as certain to be features of the next war. They are all building submarines to prey upon unarmed commercial vessels; they are all perfecting their so-called chemical warfare service; and they are all developing, with fiendish ingenuity, aerial torpedoes and other like devices that, loosening their load of explosives and deadly gases, will annihilate the civilian population of unfortified cities.

We ought not to delay a day. Every effort should be made to arouse public sentiment and to clothe it with such force that Congress can not resist the appeal for a ringing declaration in favor of the immediate assembling of a world conference on disarmament.